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ABSTRACT

Conducted in four villages situated near Tarnow, a large urban and industrial centre, this study examined the process of change in the functioning of the rural family, as set against the transformation of their general living conditions brought about by the socialist industrialization and urbanization in post-war Poland. Issues studied were: family problems in country life; formation of a new value system; new cultural demands and consumption patterns in the villages; role of endogenous and exogenous elements in the urbanization process; degree of realization of the social consequences of this process; and concrete manifestations of the process of adaptation of rural Poland to the changed situation, namely, that of a socialist industrialized community. The sample included 2 successive generations of rural families: 120 procreation families (married 5 years or less) and 120 origin families (parents and in-laws of the procreation families). It was found that the process of change consisted--within the scope of a family--mainly in a decrease of the determining effect formerly exerted by the productive-economic function upon the remaining ones, i.e., the procreational, educational, securing, and integrational-expressive functions, owing to the accessibility of extra-agricultural sources of income and to the constant decline of the significance of land as a value decisive for a given family's living conditions. (NQ)

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The social consequences of the changing functions of the rural family in post-war Poland

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I. Introductory considerations

The socialist industrialization and urbanization of Poland have caused rapid socio - cultural changes in the countryside, manifesting themselves in all aspects of village life and embracing the entire continuum from material culture to social consciousness.

These changes have appeared very markedly in the spheres of behavior, attitudes, aspirations, and expanding perspectives of the rural family. For this reason also, we can best analyze these problems directly through the aid of empiracal studies.

In the last five years, one can observe in our country a growing concern with family processes not only by scholars in their respective fields, but also by government officials.

Despite this fact, however, we are still faced with a lack of extensive research on this topic. The existing literature does not yet give us a full picture of functioning of the family in contemporary Poland, nor does it show explicitly the tendency in which these changes are headed. The main obstacles in this regard have been: 1/ the wide diversity of applied methods of empirical research, 2/ the lack of agreement as to the exact meaning of our conceptual terminology, 3/ the different degrees of complexity of various analyses and their level of generality, and 4/ the lack of continuous investigation of the same communities, all of these factors making comparative research very difficult.

II. The rural family in the light of some statistical data

Of the aproximately 7 869 000 families in Poland, nearly 45,3% presently live in countryside. The average number of persons in the rural family amounts to 3.87 / for the urban family 3.03 /. Aproximately 22.6% of rural families are composed of extended families of at least three generations, while respective urban statistic amounts to merely 10%.

The number of extended families increases in direct proportion to the size of the farm. The charakteristic feature of rural Poland remains the fact that the individual, private farm holding is still cleary dominant. All The members of the rural family farm a single productive unit. This is especially true for the larger farms where the demand for manual labor is significantly increased as a result of the generally low level of mechanization. Farm work, or in other words the economic or productive function of the family,has a very important influense on the rural social structure and its general life conditions.

The intensity of these influences largely depends on the size of landholding. In this regard it is important to mention that obout 27.3% of the rural families /i.e. about 1 million families/ own farms which provide only a secondary or additional source of support. These farms,as a rule,are not larger than aproximately two hectares. The next category of rural families is composed of that group possessing farms, which give them a primary but not sufficient source of support. These families comprise about 20% / or 700 000 families/, and possess farms ranging in size from 2 to 5 hectares. The members of both of these categories of rural families are thus forced to seek non agricultural sources of income, mainly in industry.

In turn these people gradually acquire aspirations tending towards the formation of more permanent connections with the city in the future. According to the opinion of this group, work on the farm is increasingly seen in a negative light, as only those who are strong and stupid want to remain.

In summation, the influence of the city and urban model of life most directly affect these two categories of rural families.

III. Changes in the functions of rural families. Results of my investigation.

My main objective here is to present the process of change in the functioning of the rural family, as set against the transformation of their general living conditions brought about by the socialist industrialization and urbanization in post-war Poland.

My investigation was carried out in four villages situated at 8 - 16 kms. south of Tarnów, a large urban and industrial centre. My research in these villages entailed the analysis of two successive generations of rural families related to each other by blood or marriage, namely, 120 procreation families / i.e. taken here to denote 5 years or less of marriage/ and 120 origin families / i.e. the parents and in-laws of the procreation families/. This permitted us to study the changes taking place in the functioning of rural families in their family-and-environmental aspect on the one hand, and in

their inter - generational aspect, on the other, thus allowing us to interpret the character of the examined reality in a dynamic way. The analysis of family problems in country life has served as a starting - point for a more extensive analysis of more general issuses, such as: 1/ the formation of a new value system, 2/ new cultural demands and consumption patterns in the village communities, 3/ the role of endogenous and exogenous elements in the process of urbanization, 4/ the degree of realization of the social consequences of this process, and 5/ concrete manifestations of the process of adaptation of rural Poland to the changed situation, namely, that of a socialist industrialized community.

Strongly emphasizing the analysis of empirical material I have found, that the process of the discussed changes consists - within the scope of a family - mainly in a decrease of the determining effect formerly exerted by the productive - economic function upon the remaining ones, such as the procreational, educational, securing, and integrational - expressive functions, owing to the accessibility of extra - agricultural sources of income and to the constant decline of the significance of land as a value decisive for a given family's living conditions. These factors also determine the most vital characteristics of the process of family changes, which - in the roughest outline - consist in a transition from an existence explicitly determined by the type of farm and the character of the local community,- to an existence in constant alternatives and chances for promotion dependent on individual skill and the amount kind of work undertaken by each family.

The reference system for the strongly developed aspirations of the villagers for consumption goods and cultural and civiliza - tional attainments is the town and models of behaviour disseminated by the mass media: it should be borne in mind, moreover, that the rate of growth of these aspirations considerably exceeds the possibility of meeting these demands within a rural community and by agricultural labor only.

As a result, the rural family successively sheds its features as a productive collectivity, to a growing extent assuming those of a cllectivity linked together by personal ties.

In the situation when agricultural work is combined with work in industry, the villagers very often adopt a consumer's atti - tute to their farm, which is usually treated as a source of " free " subsistence. Also, with a growing frequency, the local position of rural families is being determined by extra - rural criteria, competing successively with the prestige factor founded on the possession of land, the latter in many cases preventing the achievement of the urban models of everyday life.

The farm, losing its " extra - temporal " value in the traditional meaning, maintains on the one hand its value as the family's common possession, protected by moral and customary sanctions, while on the other hand it begins to take on a more typically professional character. This is clearly evident in the carrying out of the securing function. The latter comprises, among others, the socially recognized and commonly practised custom of " refund " payment by the family members staying on the farm to those leaving for town life or for work in industry.

The " refund " institution is an example of a conflict between two value systems, between the traditionally conceived security and the requirements of up-to-date rational production. The decline of the determining influence of the traditional forms of farming entails the autonomization of the procreative function. The traditionally admitted models of such-and-such number of children per family, deprived of their economic and productive motivation, acquire an emotive one, expressing the wish of ensuing happiness to one's family and to one's children- /i.e. prosperity and a suitable social position/.

The process of autonomisation of the procreative function is accompanied by the intensification of the educational function of the family, mainly as regards the care of children and the meeting of their economic requirements, increasingly determined by urban standars. The present - day educational ideal pursed by rural families comprises a number of elements stressing the individual's training and ability to take part in the life and activities of an open community, with a marked orientation towards an extra-local and extra-rural environment. This, however, is not coupled with a proper understanding of the requirements set forth by contemporary society in the field of education. The resulting frequent discords between parents and their children are attenuated by a gradual disappearance of the formalized family structure.

The transition from integration based upon composite productive - economic elements to integration founded upon personal, emotive

factors, entails the formation of the integrational-expressive function. In its present stage it manifests itself in the most marked way in the fact that certain institutionalized ways of behaviour either disappear giving way to others, or lose their formalized character becaming spontaneous means of emotive expression and family ties. Such changes can be seen for example in the social rules of greetings, manners and etiquette, such as in the custom of kissing the hand in the required social circumstances.

The contemporary transformational processes so rapidly undergone by young families in large measure are nothing more than a deepened and accelerated continuation of the process of change which had already been taking place in the families of their parents.

Contrary to the predominant trend in Polish sociological literature tending to mutually oppose these two generations, I have investigated the interconnections between them, regarding both the system of values as well as the functioning of family life. These interconnections are now expressed by a dialectical transitional coexistence and by the occurence of frequent clashes between the opposed elements representing, respectively, the traditional past and contemporary reality: as a result, the present-day picture of country life and of its culture has a markedly disharmonious character.

IV. Some more general social consequences of the changing function of the rural family

In the present stage of rural transformation, the infiltration of urban values and models of behavior take on a simultaneously harmonius and disharmonious character, both in the sphere of material culture as well as social consciousness.
On the one hand, we find a trend towards mutual coexistence and blending of urban and rural elements, while on the other hand, there result a strong element of conflicting values, resulting from the many contradictory elements of social life.
This suggests a situation in which the hopes and aspirations of the rural inhabitants are often greater that the present level of the economic realities of our society. The urban models clearly outreach the economic and civilizational development of the countryside, and of course, do not possess a genetic association with their life conditions. Although such urban models are commonly accepted in the countryside, they usually remain hanging in a "cultural vacuum" , as if existung on the border of two opposing environments, city and village, still markedly contrasting with each other in our society.
As a result, such urban models are not generally realized and applied, neither in the daily lifes of the villagers, nor even on the surfece on prestige level.

In a very clear way, this pertains above all to the many elements of material culture, especially with regard to manufactured products, often being used not so much for raising the standard of living, as for the purpose of satisfying rural

aspirations to equate their own village life with life in the city. There results a differentiation of forms of family structure, and together with it, of attitudes, needs, and models, whereas in traditional rural societies these features were more clesry in harmony.

We can see from this that the modern Polish village and its sulture possess a distinctively disharmonious character. Generally speaking, cultural disharmony conceals within itself important possibilities for the intensification of farm production. Great chances here lie in taking advantage of the strongly awakened needs and aspirations of rural society, especially regarding the potentialities of introducing modern technology into the countryside.

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